

## Italy should look to science before deregulating stem-cell therapies

*The following is an edited excerpt.*

The Second International Vatican Adult Stem Cell meeting was a shamelessly choreographed performance. Sick children were paraded for television, sharing the stage with stem-cell companies and scientists desperate to hawk a message that their therapies must be speeded to clinical use.

A kilometre away at the Italian senate, meanwhile, parliamentarians further eroded protection for vulnerable patients targeted by stem-cell companies. On 10 April, they amended an already controversial ministerial decree with a clause that would redefine stem-cell therapy as tissue transplantation, thereby releasing it from any regulatory oversight.

It is wrong to exploit the desperation of the disabled and the terminally ill and to raise false hopes of quick fixes, as some at the Vatican meeting tried to do. It is also wrong to try to use such patients as experimental animals by bypassing regulatory agencies, as the Italian parliament seems to want to do.